

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 MCE-00 OMB-01
TRSE-00 AID-05 ACDA-12 SSM-03 HA-05 EB-08 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /108 W
-----115075 161837Z /46

O R 161749Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3144
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON 4235
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6327

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS PEPR IS US
SUBJ: INITIAL ISRAELI REACTIONS TO APPROVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT
PACKAGE DEAL

1. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY ISRAELI REACTION TO THE SENATE
APPROVAL OF THE AIRPLANE PACKAGE DEAL WAS ONE OF BITTER
DISAPPOINTMENT AND ANGER. WHEN KNESSET RECONVENED TODAY
AFTER VACATION BREAK, PRO-GOVERNMENT MK'S STRESSED THE
GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AS A RESULT OF WHAT THEY SEE
AS A DEFEAT FOR BOTH ISRAEL AND THE US, WHICH SAW IT
NECESSARY TO CAPITULATE TO ARAB PRESSURE. SOME LIKUD
MEMBERS CHARGED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST STEP OF A US
TURNING AWAY FROM ISRAEL, AND THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD
NOW HAVE TO FACE THE PROSPECT OF GOING IT ALONE. THEY
WONDER WHAT WILL BE THE NEXT STEP IN THIS PROCESS OF
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GOING IT ALONE.

2. OPPOSITION LEADERS CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST
SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE OF ITS
HANDLING OF THE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN AND ABOVE ALL BECAUSE
IT LET US-ISRAELI RELATIONS DETERIORATE WITH ITS
RECKLESS SETTLEMENT POLICY AND ITS SHIFT ON 242. ALL

SIDES CALLED FOR A CRITICAL REEXAMINATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SENATE VOTE FOR THE FUTURE OF US-ISRAELI RELATIONS. HOWEVER, NO OBSERVER THOUGHT THAT ISRAEL WOULD REFUSE TO TAKE THE PLANES OFFERED IT.

3. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TOLD A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE THAT HE DID NOT WANT NOR TRY TO MINIMIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE ISSUE, WHICH WILL BE DISCUSSED ON SUNDAY BY THE CABINET ... "AND WE SHALL HAVE TO CONSIDER OUR POLITICAL STEPS." HE EXPRESSED "DEEP SORROW" ABOUT THE SENATE APPROVAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S PACKAGE PROPOSAL AND CLAIMED THAT THE US COMMITMENT OF SEPTEMBER 1975 TO SUPPLY THE AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN UNCONDITIONAL, AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO JUSTIFICATION IN LINKING THE SUPPLY OF THESE PLANES TO ISRAEL, EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA. THE GOI HAS OPPOSED THE DEAL AND HAS OBJECTED TO THE SUPPLY OF THE PLANES TO TWO ARAB COUNTRIES WITH WHICH ISRAEL IS IN A STATE OF WAR... AS TO THE FUTURE, "WE SHALL DISCUSS AT THE NEXT CABINET SESSION WHAT WE SHALL DO AND WE WILL PUBLISH AN ANNOUNCEMENT AFTER A DECISION IS TAKEN."

4. SOMEWHAT IN CONTRAST TO THE BITTER DISMAY VOICED BY LIKUD SPOKESMEN, FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN (IN FINLAND) AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN
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ARE QUOTED AS MERELY EXPRESSING REGRETS AND SEEKING TO MINIMIZE THE IMPACT OF THE PACKAGE DEAL ON US-ISRAELI RELATIONS.

5. MOSHE ARENS (LIKUD-HERUT) CHAIRMAN OF THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE REGRETTED THE TURN OF EVENTS, FEARED THAT STRENGTHENING OF ISRAEL'S ENEMIES WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE PEACE PROCESS, AND SUGGESTED THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOW DEVELOP ITS OWN SOPHISTICATED COMBAT AIRCRAFT. YOSEPH ROM (LIKUD-HERUT) COMPARED THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE VOTE TO THE 1955 SOVIET ARMS DEAL WITH EGYPT AND A SERIOUS SETBACK FOR THE PEACE PROCESS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6327

6. THE LABOR PARTY CALLED FOR A SPECIAL KNESSET
DEBATE ON MAY 17, BUT DECIDED NOT TO ASK FOR A VOTE
OF CONFIDENCE, SINCE THIS MIGHT MAKE IT MORE
DIFFICULT FOR THE CRITICS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT
COALITION TO SPEAK OUT AND MIGHT ALSO EXPOSE LABOR
TOO MUCH TO CHARGES THAT IT IS ON THE SIDE OF RAKAH AND
THE LEFT. NEVERTHELESS, THE PARTY LEADERS ATTACKED
THE GOVERNMENT VIGOROUSLY. SHIMON PERES SAID THE
VOTE HAS MARKED A SAD DAY FOR ISRAEL AND STRESSED
THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME ISRAEL HAD SUFFERED
A DEFEAT IN THE US SENATE, WHICH HAD TRADITIONALLY
BLOCKED ADMINISTRATION MEASURES LIKELY TO HURT
ISRAEL. HE CRITICIZED DAYAN AND BEGIN FOR NOT
HAVING DISCUSSED THE ISSUE IN WASHINGTON OUT OF
A MISPLACED FEELING OF SENSITIVITY REGARDING
"INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER
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COUNTRY." HE ATTRIBUTED ISRAEL'S "DEFEAT" TO
THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAD PERMITTED
RELATIONS WITH THE US TO DETERIORATE. HE WAS JOINED
BY RABIN, ALLON, BAR LEV, SARID AND OTHER LABOR PARTY
LEADERS, WHO CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN
INDECISIVE IN HANDLING ITS OBJECTIONS, SINCE IT COULD
NOT DECIDE WHETHER IT WANTED THE PLANES MORE THAN IT

WANTED TO KILL THE PACKAGE DEAL.

7. DUE TO THE LATENESS OF THE SENATE VOTE, ONLY THE AFTERNOON PAPERS COMMENTED TODAY. MAARIV ATTRIBUTED THE "DEFEAT TO THE DEFECTIVE TACTICS AND INDECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT," AND SAID THAT "A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED. THE ISRAELI LOBBY HAS BEEN BEATEN. AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL HAS ACQUIRED A NEW, MORE DISCONCERTING INTERPRETATION.... THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL CANNOT BE EXONERATED OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY." YEDYOT CALLS INTO QUESTION U S RELIABILITY AS AN ALLY, NOW THAT ISRAEL CAN NO LONGER COUNT ON A SENATE MAJORITY TO PROTECT IT, BUT BLAMED THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT AT LEAST IN PART FOR THIS TURN OF EVENTS. ISRAEL RADIO CITED WASHINGTON REPORTS OF ALLEGEDLY GLEEFUL REMARKS BY WHITE HOUSE AIDES HAMILTON JORDAN AND JODY POWELL "THAT THE BACK OF THE JEWISH LOBBY HAD BEEN BROKEN" AND THAT THE US COULD NOW GET ON WITH THE PEACE MAKING PROCESS WITHOUT ITS INTERFERENCE. THEIR REMARKS WERE SAID BY ISRAEL RADIO'S CORRESPONDENT CONNIE LONG TO HAVE BEEN HEARD BY SEVERAL AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES AND TO HAVE BEEN "LABELED BY MANY IN WASHINGTON AS CLEARLY ANTI-SEMITIC."

8. AN IDF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER TOLD THE DEFENSE
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ATTACHE THAT THE "PACKAGE PAVED THE WAY FOR THE UNINTENTIONAL DESTRUCTION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL. ONLY THE U S IS CAPABLE TO DESTROY US; THE ARABS ARE NOT. THIS IS A DISASTER FOR US-ISRAELI RELATIONS; A CHANGE UNPARALLELED IN THE 30-YEAR HISTORY OF THE STATE. THE AIRCRAFT FOR SAUDI ARABIA ARE TERRIBLE, BUT THIS IS MINOR WHEN COMPARED TO THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. WHAT WILL YOU DO TO US NEXT AS A SIGNAL TO THOSE WHOM YOU FEAR, I.E., THE SAUDI ARABIANS."

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PRESS HERE HAS BEEN PREDICTING DEFEAT FOR PAST TWO DAYS, IMPACT OF SENATE VOTE WILL REVERBERATE EVER LOUDER FOR AT LEAST NEXT FEW DAYS. WE MUST ANTICIPATE EXTREMELY SOUR MOOD IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AS RESULT. CHANCES OF GOI'S DEALING CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH OTHER TOUGH ISSUES SUCH AS SETTING A FINAL DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON OR NEXT STAGES IN PEACE PROCESS ARE SLIM. EVENTUALLY THE ANGER WILL SUBSIDE AND A MORE SOBER PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT OF THE VOTE'S IMPLICATIONS WILL SET IN. UNFORTUNATELY, IN THE MEANTIME, BEGIN AND THE CABINET MAY WELL HARDEN THEIR POSITIONS ON OTHER ISSUES IN REACTION TO THIS

"NEW SAUDI THREAT" TO ISRAEL'S LONG-TERM SECURITY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, US CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE BILLS, MILITARY SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV06327
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780206-1106
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780552/aaaabscr.tel
Line Count: 226
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 15373e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2673117
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INITIAL ISRAELI REACTIONS TO APPROVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT PACKAGE DEAL
TAGS: MASS, PEPR, IS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/15373e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014